

## **NIIW**

Now in its ninth year, National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), April 14 - 20, 2002, focuses attention on the tremendous benefits of immunizations to the health of children.

NIIW is an annual observance that highlights the importance of timely immunization. Immunization is one of the most effective ways of protecting against disease. NIIW is a time to focus greater attention on our achievements and on the work we do throughout the year to raise coverage levels. We celebrate with our partners the accomplishments that would not have occurred without successful collaboration. We also take the time to revitalize joint efforts to remind parents, caregivers, health care providers, and others of the need to take appropriate steps to protect children against vaccine-preventable diseases and give them a healthy start to life.

The goals of NIIW are to :

- Make parents and caregivers aware of the need to protect their children from birth against 11 vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Encourage better communication between parents/caregivers and their health care provider.
- Inform parents and caregivers of the need to follow through on childhood immunization recommendations by making and keeping needed appointments.
- Increase parents/caregivers awareness of, and access to, resources, such as toll-free 800 numbers, to help them locate facilities that offer free or low-cost immunizations for their children, especially if they do not have insurance or a health care provider.

Since NIIW was established in 1993, dedicated people across the country have joined forces with State and local health departments, health care providers, and other partners to deliver the immunization message. For NIIW 2001 more than 500 media events occurred across the nation.

Every community, large and small, can play a vital role in protecting its children from vaccine-preventable diseases. Here are a few suggestions. But the best ideas come from local communities. Share your ideas so other communities can benefit from your success.

### **Community**

- Harness the power of the community by bringing together local groups, organizations, businesses, hospitals, churches, providers and political leaders to plan local NIIW activities.
- Plan to kick-off NIIW with an event, health fair, news conference or any other activity that will interest the media and draw public attention. A children's fair with clowns, balloons, gifts, pony rides, and other children's activities will attract parents and appeal to the media.

- Ask your governor or mayor to sign a proclamation for NIIW
- Organize a door-to-door education campaign to raise awareness about the importance of timely immunization.
- Ask local businesses for donations of money or in-kind gifts. The funds can be used for brochures, flyers, posters, billboards and other educational materials. Certificates to fast-food restaurants or other local businesses can be used as incentives.
- Recognize during an awards/appreciation luncheon community leaders and healthcare providers who have shown outstanding leadership in raising local immunization coverage rates.

### **Providers**

- Develop localized patient-education immunization materials for health care providers.
- Help local providers set up a simple, inexpensive immunization reminder system.
- Encourage hospitals and health maintenance organizations to promote immunization in prenatal classes and during prenatal visits.
- Help local clinics develop strategies to reduce wait times and provide patient-friendly services.
- Hold in-service training seminars at medical, health, and social service agencies on record-keeping, eliminating access barriers, and reminder-recall systems.
- Encourage local hospitals to do a grand rounds program on immunizations.

### **Parents & Caregivers**

- Work with local health departments, clinics and hospitals to promote neighborhood clinics.
- Distribute immunization material to social service agencies that serve children, such as foster homes, refugee centers, homeless shelters, and day care programs.
- Write an article or op-ed piece for the local newspaper.
- Encourage schools, churches, libraries, hospitals, and other groups to print articles in newsletters, post notices on bulletin boards, and make special announcements.
- Work with local media to sponsor an immunization awareness campaign.
- Post notices on Websites.

- Ask utilities and retailers to include immunization information with their billing statements and encourage employers to include educational materials with employee pay statements.